

December 2003 Injury Prevention Newsletter

Alaska News & Resources

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1. Seatbelts Save Lives

Last May, one of our CHEMS staff had a daughter that ran into the rear of a sweeper on the Richardson Highway going 50 miles per hour. The sweeper was obscured by dust so the daughter had no idea of the impending doom and no breaking was done prior to the hit. Troopers and EMS responders arriving at the scene were expecting serious injuries if not a fatality from viewing the car's condition. Her airbags deployed and she was wearing her seat belt. After a thorough check at the hospital, she walked out and only took one day off work due to being sore and bruised. Seven months later she was strapping her new daughter into a child passenger restraint, or infant seat, to transport her home from the hospital.

Other stories, some with good outcomes like the one above and others that with sad outcomes because a seat belt wasn't used were written about in the [Anchorage Daily News](#) on Tuesday, December 30, 2003 in "Strapped In For Life" by George Bryson. An argument for adopting a primary seat belt law in Alaska was made in the article. If you haven't read the article and would like to, you can access it at <http://www.adn.com/life/story/4565190p-4538021c.html>

2. Carbon Monoxide in the Home

On December 6, 2003 an Alaska family of five was found in their home, four were found dead from carbon monoxide poisoning and the one transported to care died in the hospital the following week. The Anchorage community and others around the state have used this tragedy to inform and remind Alaskans about how to be safer with regard to possible carbon monoxide exposure in their homes.

During this new year, 2004, be sure to have your furnace checked to make sure it is functioning properly and check on other fuel burning appliances too, look to see that the cold air exchange for the home is free of any blockage, and have at least one carbon monoxide monitor placed in the home where it will be heard if it alerts you to high levels of carbon monoxide.

There is a publication titled 'Gimme Shelter' produced by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation that goes over how to make your house safe and high-performing. To access this publication you can call (907) 338-6100 or (800) 478-2432 or to check on this type of information and other home safety visit their web site at www.ahfc.state.ak.us.

Other resources for information about safe homes from a construction standpoint or for over all safety issues include the Alaska Building Science Network (ABSN) @ www.absn.com or at the CHEMS site www.chems.alaska.gov

under “what’s new?” from the injury surveillance and prevention tag. Southern Region EMS has developed a new home safety checklist: "How Safe is Your Home" that can be found there.

3. Strategic Planning for Injury Prevention

On November 15, 2003, injury prevention specialists representing agencies from across the state graciously donated a Saturday afternoon to begin the strategic planning process that will ultimately result in an Alaska Injury Prevention Plan. This strategic planning session focused on two distinct injury problems identified by Alaska Trauma Registry data: All terrain vehicle injuries for Alaskan children age 14 and under; Elder fall injuries to Alaskans age 70 and older. They were chosen because of the high rates, severity, and poor outcomes of these injuries, as well as no measured improvement over the past decade.

http://www.chems.alaska.gov/Injury_Prevention/WhatsNew.htm

4. Alaska SAFE KIDS teleconference

On Wednesday, January 7, the Alaska SAFE KIDS coalition will have a statewide teleconference at 10:00 AM. Contact your local SAFE KIDS Chapter or Coalition Chairs. Chairs please contact Gordon Glaser 269-3433 twenty-four hours in advance with a phone number for where you may be reached.

5. Silver Cars may be Safest

Have you ever wondered about the best color for a car with regard to safety. A study published in the British Medical Journal, December 20-27, 2003 raises the possibility that silver may be a passive safety factor for reduced risk of car crash injury. The researchers found that “drivers of silver cars were 50% less likely to be involved in a crash that caused serious injury than white cars.”

More from the article can be found at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/327/7429/1455>

6. It’s Good To Talk: the power of stories over statistics

Statistics often give us a way to prioritize strategies for injury prevention programs. However, relaying statistics to try to effect behavior change or influence decision makers isn’t always as helpful. Another article published in the British Medical Journal in December found that stories were more powerful than statistics when talking about infant safety on airplanes. Find the article at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/327/7429/1424>.

7. Injury Prevention in Schools

In the most recent issue of the American Journal of Health Education in the supplemental publication [AJHE 2003, 34(5 Suppl)] there is a commentary on using a developmental approach to injury prevention and an article about surveillance to help sway decision makers about injury prevention programs in schools. It is difficult to access these articles on-line however you may find the abstracts at the SafetyLit site under the abstracts for the week of December 29, 2003. Scroll down to the section that deals with injury prevention in schools @ <http://www.safetylit.org/week/2003/031229.htm>.

8. Product Recalls and Safety Information.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tracks injuries or deaths in over 15,000 consumer products. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at 800 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at 800-638-8270. Other information and product recalls are available on their website: www.cpsc.gov.

Happy New Year!! May 2004 Be Injury Free

This newsletter has been compiled by the Section of Community Health & EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Division of Public Health and sent to subscribers of the AK-Prev and AHELP list-serves. It has also been sent as a 'bcc' to others in Alaska including Public Health Centers, SAFE KIDS coalitions, Native Health organizations, and regional EMS Councils and Coordinators who may be interested and active in injury prevention and health promotion. The purpose is to share resources, breaking news, training opportunities, product recalls, and opinions to help prevent injuries to Alaskans. Feedback and contributions are encouraged. Contributions can be directed to Karen Lawfer, (907)465-8632, karen_lawfer@health.state.ak.us